

JUL 31 1918

Vom Kriegstheater.

Neu York, 31. Juli.
Französische militärische Kreise ziehen aus den heftigen deutschen Gegenangriffen, welche an den verschiedenen Fronten der Aisne-Marne-Schlacht seit Montag eingesetzt haben, den Schluss, daß die Deutschen die Errichtung einer neuen Verteidigungslinie beabsichtigen, um auf dieser die Vormarschbewegung der Alliierten zum Stehen zu bringen. Diese neue Linie wird als von dem Plateau südlich der Grise, welche bei Soisson in die Oise einmündet, als dem westlichen bis auf die Höhe südlich der Aisne als dem östlichen Stützpunkt sich hinziehend gedacht.

Die militärische Beobachtung Washingtons des augenblicklichen Standes der Schlacht ist anderer Auffassung. Nach dieser bietet die Formation der heutigen deutschen Verteidigungslinie mit ihren vielen Aus- und Einbuchtungen keine genügende Stützpunkte für eine Heftigkeit. Da auch die Linie Grise-Aisne unter dem gleichen Mangel leidet, so wird man sich auch betrefend dieser der Washingtoner Auffassung anschließen müssen. Dann aber müßten die schweren deutschen Gegenangriffe seit Montag als Deckungsvorbereitung für die Errichtung einer weiter nördlich gelegenen festen Verteidigungslinie betrachtet werden. Die militärischen Kreise in Washington schließen aus den schweren Kämpfen und Gegenaktionen auf die Errichtung einer neuen Phase der Schlacht, von welcher die Entscheidung erwartet wird. Die Vorbereitung der Entscheidung besteht darin, daß es den Deutschen nicht so bald gelingt, sich auf einer Abwehrlinie, an welcher der Vormarsch der Alliierten zum Stehen kommen könnte, festzusetzen. Das Tempo der Vorbereitungsbewegung kann wohl verlangsamt werden, der Druck darf aber nicht aufhören.

Den härtesten Druck und Gegenstand finden wir heute in dem Raum südlich von Fère-en-Tardenois, in dem die Amerikaner kämpfen, nördlich der Ourcq, und zwar dort, wo der Fluß erst in südlicher und dann in südlicher Richtung abbiegt. Die Kämpfe um Gierges und Sergh sind die bisher schwersten der gesamten Schlacht, und der Angriff sowohl wie die Verteidigung sind, den Bericht aus dem amerikanischen Hauptquartier zufolge, gleich heftig. In diesen Kämpfen ist der alte Schlachtgeist wieder lebendig geworden, welcher dem einzelnen Mann noch seinen Platz einräumt.

In den Handgemengen von Gierges, Sergh und Sergh hat sich die offene Feldschlacht bis zu ihrer äußersten Beteiligtheit entwickelt. Die Amerikaner sind im Sturm auf bis an den südlichen Rand des Nessel-Plateau, direkt östlich von Fère, welches von den Deutschen besetzt gehalten wird und in ein einziges Maschinengewehr-Feuer umgewandelt zu sein scheint, vorgegangen. Damit ist die Vorstoß-Spitze in diesen Raum verlegt, dessen strategische Bedeutung schon

aus dem Umstand erhellt, daß die deutsche Verteidigung dort von Ferntruppen ausgeführt wird. Fère-en-Tardenois bildet die Zentralfeststellung der Mitte der Angriffsfront der Alliierten. Zugrunde kann man, wie die Schlacht sich entwickelt hat, von Mitte und Flanken kaum noch sprechen. Auch die Angriffe, welche dem westlichen und östlichen Flügel halfen, sind zu Frontalangriffen geworden. Die Voraussetzungen eines französischen militärischen Beobachters, daß der East, in welchem die Deutschen ursprünglich gefestigt hatten, zur Rüste werden würde, hat sich bewahrheitet. Der Boden und zwei Wände der Rüste werden nun vorgezogen. Aus dem Schraubstock-Mandel ist ein Zersprengungs-Verfälschung geworden. Aber die Sache mit der Rüste ist, worauf die militärisch möglichen Kreise in Washington ausdrücklich hinweisen, gefährlich, denn schließlich könnte die ganze Rüste zusammenbrechen.

Auf der östlichen Flanke, um die übliche Bezeichnung beizubehalten, finden die heftigsten Kämpfe auf der Linie Fère-en-Tardenois—Le Plessier—Grand Mesnil, die sich nördlich bis Buzancy, südlich von Soissons, erstreckt, fließt. Es ist den Franzosen in lokalen Kämpfen gelungen, auf der Höhe nördlich von Fère Fortschritte zu machen.

Auf der östlichen Flanke der Angriffsfront, wo britische und italienische Abteilungen mitkämpfen, haben die Deutschen auf beiden Seiten von El. Supplente angegriffen, es ist ihnen nicht gelungen, westlich der Ortschaft etwas vorzurücken. Die Londoner Meldung, daß die Franzosen Romigny, weiter südlich und dicht vor Fère-en-Tardenois gelegen, besetzt hätten, hat sowohl in den amerikanischen als in den französischen Kreisen keine Bestätigung gefunden.

Das Durchdringen von Angriffen und Gegenangriffen an allen drei Fronten der Schlacht erschwert die Gewinnung eines klaren Bildes betreffs des heutigen Standes der Schlacht und verhilft auch einer aufmerksamen Beobachtung der Ausfälle betreffs der Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten. Die gesamte weitere Entwicklung hängt davon ab, ob die Deutschen imstande sein werden, sich auf einer neuen Verteidigungslinie festzusetzen und ob sie dann wirklich sein werden, sich zu einer Entscheidungsschlacht zu stellen.

Die Briten haben in Flandern einen Erfolg erzielt. Militärliche Truppen haben die Ortschaft Messis, die bisher äußerste westliche Stelle des deutschen Vormarsches gegen den Bahnknotenpunkt Hazebrouck in der Richtung gegen die Kanalfront, gesichert. Das stellt an sich einen bedeutenden Erfolg dar, man wird aber auch dieses militärische Ereignis unter die lokalen Unternehmungen einreihen müssen.

H. H. v. M.

JUL 31 1918

GERMAN RETREAT
AS MAURICE SEES ITOnly Possible Explanation Is
That Defense Had Been Worn
Down, General Says.

AMERICANS A BIG FACTOR

Effect of Dash and Enthusiasm of
New Troops Among War-Wearied
Armies Tremendous.By Major Gen. Sir FREDERICK
MAURICE.Copyright, 1918, by The New York Times Company.
Special Cable to The New York Times.

LONDON, July 30.—There is only one possible explanation of the German retreat "according to plan," and that is that the defense has been worn down by steady progress on the attack.

As I have already explained, there was nothing in the shape of the German salient or in the character of the ground which the enemy occupied to make it peculiarly difficult for him to cut the line of the Ourcq until his internal communications had been reorganized. Foch's counterattack was delivered on the western flank of the salient, and that flank, from Soissons as far south as the Ourcq, near Oulchy-le-Château, had been holding well since the first days of the allied advance, while on the other flank, between Rheims and the Marne, our progress has not been such as in any way to endanger the retreat of the German troops on the southern front.

Therefore there has never been any question of these troops being pinched out and of the Allies making by such means large captures of prisoners and guns.

This southern front has been in the greatest difficulties owing to the breakdown of the German communications inside the salient, and the allied pressure upon them has been too incessant to allow the exhausted troops to be relieved and a new line of defense to be formed. The Germans required time to enable them to settle down on the line of the Ourcq through Fère-en-Tardenois, and they could not gain the necessary time.

Among the causes of this failure I should place very high the effect of the dash and energy of the American troops. All the other armies now fighting are more or less war-weary and they all contain a high proportion of lads and of middle-aged men. Therefore the appearance of a new army in the field with its eagerness and enthusiasm unimpaired and composed of the pick of the manhood of a great nation must be out of all proportion to its numerical strength.

It would be absurd to suppose that anything like the million and a quarter of Americans who, we are told, have been shipped from the United States, have taken part in this battle or are anywhere on the front.

The military power of America is only just beginning to make itself felt, and the most hopeful encouraging feature of this battle is that that beginning has been so effective, for, I would repeat, it has not been the danger of the Allies driving in the flanks of the salient which has caused the Germans to withdraw, as the danger of the German progress on our flanks at Cambrai and in the second battle of Ypres caused us to withdraw, but the defeat of the enemy on the southern front by the French-American forces opposed to them.

In fact, the German retreat has been caused by direct pressure, and has not been carried out in order to avoid the contingent danger.

I am inclined to think that it is doubtful whether the enemy has yet got a complete defensive line either on the Vesle or on the Aisne, and it looks as if he were still trying hard to gain time, for there would be no point in sacrificing men in a counterattack if he had made up his mind as to how far he intended to withdraw and had all his arrangements for withdrawal ready.

In fact, the battle is continuing under conditions which are very unfavorable to the enemy, and it still seems to me premature to prophesy as to how and when it will end.

The French-American advance at Fère-en-Tardenois and across the Ourcq has had the effect of turning the front between Soissons and the Ourcq, and it has, in consequence, begun to crumble.

The Butte de Chalmont, a big hill dominating Oulchy-le-Château and Nanteuil, which has formed the buttress of the western face of the salient, has fallen into our hands, and it is clear from the presence of Scotch troops at Buzancy that Foch is taking advantage of the allied progress in the south to reinforce his attack on the Soissons front, and so, by maintaining pressure on the enemy all around the salient, to keep the initiative which he has won in this battle and prevent the enemy from obtaining the time he wants to establish a new front.

The enemy is carrying out his retreat in good order under cover of strong rear guards plentifully supplied with machine guns, and in broken and wooded country, such as forms the present battlefield, the delaying power of machine guns is very great. It is therefore not at all likely that we shall be able to cut off any considerable part of the German forces in the salient, but this will in no way detract from the completeness of the allied victory.

If the enemy had been able to strike elsewhere and gain some conspicuous success before his retreat, he might have felt well argued that he had changed his plans owing to altered circumstances, and had decided to employ his troops where they could be used more effectively, but no argument will now alter the fact that the second battle of the Marne has ended like the first, in complete German defeat.

We must, however, keep in mind that what we have achieved so far is to prevent the enemy from obtaining the decisive results which the German General Staff and their friends at home confidently believed to be within their grasp. This is no small matter, but it is in its essence a measure of defense and has, for example, as one of its chief results, removed the danger to Paris.

But we are still left with a long way to go before we can obtain a satisfactory decision in our favor, and the situation calls for an increase rather than a slackening of our efforts, so that we may be able to shorten the war by taking every possible advantage of the successes we have gained. There has been very natural tendency to exaggerate the effect of Foch's blow from the blue, and there is little doubt that these exaggerations have been used for their own purpose by agitators in fomenting the strike which has so happily collapsed.

The enemy are quite certain to try to follow up their practice in the past of bringing the year's campaign to an end with some show of success, which will carry in their people through the period of winter gloom and inactivity. We must keep our eyes skinned if we are not again to be caught out as we have been heretofore.

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FOCH USING CAVALRY
AS LIGHT RESERVESHorsemen Fill Gaps in the Lines
Until Infantry Can Be
Moved to the Scene.

WASHINGTON, July 23.—Skillful use of French cavalry has marked General Foch's tactics ever since he took over control of the allied armies as supreme commander, according to information reaching military circles here. The horsemen have played an important rôle in the whole battle of 1918, as the struggle which began March 21 with the first German drive has come to be known.

The employment of the swift-moving mounted columns in the present counterstroke from the Aisne-Marne line has been noted in the dispatches. Against the great mobility of the mounted men to throw them in wherever his advancing infantry units were in danger of losing touch with one another in the heat and confusion of the contest. No gaps have been left where the enemy might strike back, for always the horsemen came up to fill the hole until the infantry line could be rectified and connected in a solid front.

The same tactics marked the first use of French cavalry in the battle of Picardy, when the French took over eighty-eight kilometers of front from the British to permit the latter to mass reserves at seriously threatened points of the line further north. A French cavalry corps, complete with light artillery, armored cars, and cyclists, arrived first on the scene in Picardy and relieved the British. The cavalrymen fought it out until the heavy French infantry arrived and took over the task.

Three days later the horsemen were on the move again, this time hurrying to the front where the enemy was hitting hard at the Lys line. They rode hard as the advance guard of the French infantry columns, marching toward St. Omar. In the first twenty-four hours, despite the long strain of fighting in Picardy, they covered 125 kilometers without losing a man or a horse on the way. In sixty-six hours they had transferred their whole corps over 200 kilometers and arrived east of Mont Cassel.

"It was a wonderful sight," wrote the Chief of Staff of a division. "The horses were in fine condition, the men were cheerful and went in singing in spite of the sufferings and privations they had to endure." The cavalry corps stood in support of the British for five days in April after the enemy had forced the line held by the Portuguese division. It maintained communication between two British armies and organized the ground from Mont Cassel to Mont Kemmel while the French Army moved up behind it.

Later, at the battle of Loos, the cavalry blocked gaps in the line, and the final definite occupation of the town for the Allies was accomplished by a cavalry battalion. A few days afterward the same cavalry, after another long ride, met the enemy advance against Villers-Cotterêts Woods, in the Aisne sector, where the fighting today is raging fiercely and where the horsemen are again engaged. When the Germans drove forward in their effort to get around the forest to Compiègne, the horsemen blocked the road between the wooded region and the River Ourcq.

In view of this record for swift movement and dashing attack, the cavalry appears to have established a new place for itself in modern warfare. The troops are the light reserves, who are always hurried first into the point of danger to hold until the slow-moving infantry arrives. Such is the making use of them in a way, it is believed, that insures their successful chance when the day comes for the Allies to drive back all along the line.

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The War Situation

By THE MILITARY EXPERT OF THE NEW YORK TIMES

There is very strong indication that the German retreat got somewhat out of hand. The general plan of the retreat, as given in these columns yesterday, seems to be that which is being followed. But, like many other military conceptions, it is one thing to plan and another to carry out.

The enthusiasm of the French, who, when they found the Germans giving way before them, pressed the advantage, when they should have merely held where they were, did much to prevent a veritable disaster from striking the German Army in the first battle of the Marne, and to this extent, harmed the splendid plan which had been conceived for that battle. It is extremely difficult under such circumstances as then prevailed to control the action of all the various units of a huge army. But if it is difficult when an army is on the offensive, it is much more so when the army is in retreat.

That is what the Germans have been contending against, and apparently their scheme has to some extent gone wrong. Between the Ourcq and the Vesle River there is an almost inconceivable mass of military material. All that the Germans had collected for their offense against the Marne is practically locked up in this area. It is being moved back as fast as the meagre transportation facilities permit. But these facilities consist of but few roads and two single-track railroads, a part of both of which are under shellfire, and all under airplane observation and subject to bombing. The efficacy of the latter feature under present conditions can be appreciated from the fact that at an altitude of from 10,000 to 15,000 feet the accuracy of the bombing plane is almost if not quite equal to that of the heavy artillery at that range in yards.

These communications consist of a fairly good road from Fère to Braime on the Vesle, the railroad from Fère to Bazoches, a mediocre road from Coulognes to Fismes, and a single track road to Plamoy by way of the Ardennes Valley. Over these lines all of the German guns and supplies must move. As we approach the end of these roads we naturally would find a tremendous congestion, everything jammed, struggling to find its way through before the rearward is forced to break ground and give way to the rear.

The Germans apparently had planned to stop at the Ourcq in order to give time for this mass of material to be moved. But the Allies were pressing so closely that the rearward was unable to hold them back. Possibly, also, the

rearward took positions too close to the main body, so that, while it was intended that the rearward and that only should have been engaged, the main body was unintentionally but none the less necessarily involved. At any rate, whatever the cause may have been, what seems to have happened is that, contrary to the German wishes or expectations, the main body found themselves with the rearward either driven in or disposed of, and the mass of materials close under the allied guns and in consequent danger.

The probable German plan was, as has been stated, to make a stand on the Ourcq. But the American troops pressed the fighting, followed the Germans closely across the river and before the pursuit could be checked were firmly established on the northern bank. This move took, in reverse, the German positions on the Butte de Chalmont, just northeast of Cugny. The Germans then were forced to withdraw, to escape capture, and the French took possession, immediately advancing their line beyond Grand Rozoy as a result.

The position on the Butte de Chalmont was the key to the whole situation from Fère westward. Particularly was this true of the north bank of the Ourcq, which the American forces held. From this height the German dispositions were clearly visible. In order to restore the situation and to gain time, the Germans counterattacked. The weather favored them, a heavy fog preventing the Allies from utilizing the advantages which they had obtained.

Apparently some slight advantage was gained. But the fight is still progressing furiously, and does not seem to be favoring one side or the other at present. This does not mean, of course, that Foch's troops are failing in their efforts to force a continuation of the retreat. It is highly unreasonable to suppose that the Germans will halt on their present line, while just a few miles beyond is the very much stronger line of the Vesle. But the Germans do need time. They need it badly in order to save their materials and guns, and to get it they have to fight for it.

In a sense, we have come to the crucial period of the Allies' offense. Not that the capture of a great number of prisoners is at stake. This has never been the issue, and it has never appeared that there was the slightest chance of the Crown Prince's army surrendering. But the latest opportunity for the destruction of German guns and war supplies is at hand, and this is what Foch is driving for at the moment.

N. Y. EVENING MAIL

JUL 31 1918

1914-1918.

As we are entering into the fifth year of the war, a comparison of the past with the present discloses contrasts which are full of promise and encouragement for the cause to which we are pledged.

At this time in 1914 the ruthless German power, after a generation of uninterrupted arming and plotting against the liberties of the world, was tearing savagely over the body of Belgium in its thirst for the heart of France. To the superficial observer it seemed that nothing could stay the blow. The German fighting machine, carefully built for its task, seemed overwhelmingly superior to the resistance that the free nations could offer.

Repelled at last, when they were approaching the suburbs of Paris, the Germans turned their attention to the eastern front. The crushing of Russia, the pounding of the German hordes through Serbia, through the Balkans, over Roumania, and the building of the German "bridge" to Asia Minor, gave color to the German boast that her armies were invincible. It seemed to those who lacked supreme faith in the ultimate triumph of justice that the sentence of death lay against the freedom of the world.

But the mills of the gods are implacable. They grind exceeding fine, if sometimes slowly. A survey of the world to-day shows Germany and her allies everywhere on the defensive. After four years of advance, interrupted now and then by allied counter-thrusts, Germany is retreating—retreating slowly but surely.

In Italy, in the Balkans, in Russia, in Asia Minor, the power of the central powers is waning. On the west front, after four super-offensives which netted her inadequate results, Germany is encountering a force with which she has been unable to cope. Her fifth offensive has been turned into a difficult retreat, involving heavy losses for the enemy and promising still graver disasters. The second battle of the Marne is the beginning of the German march out of western Europe—out of France, out of Belgium, back of the frontier of freedom.

On the sea, as on land, Germany's felonious arm is withering. The waves of her hate are beating impotently against the bridge of ships which America and her allies have built as a crossing for her vigorous hosts to the battlefields and for the moving of supplies for our brother-nations.

In the field of diplomacy as on the battlefields of sea and land Germany is on the retreat. Austria-Hungary's power has been paralyzed by the discontent of her subjects. Turkey is chafing at the bonds that hold her to the German chariot wheel, if she has not already broken them. Bulgaria is seeking an opportunity to withdraw from an alliance into which the greed of her leaders betrayed her.

The year 1918 is the beginning of the great decision. It behooves us to exert every energy, as a nation and as individuals, to make that decision a mighty blow for mankind.

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THE PRAISE OF AMERICANS.

In the early stages of America's participation in the war it was natural to receive with some reserve the words of praise given to our soldiers. Our intervention in the war, unconventionally altruistic, seemed as much a gift from heaven as the Russian betrayal seemed an emanation from the pit. Every American uniform was a sign of dawn after a black and dreadful night. That the French, the British, and Italians were willing to exaggerate American good qualities can be readily understood. They wanted us to come on over.

That the laudation should continue when the first American troops appeared on the line was also natural. America's aid was still more a hope than an actuality. It is altogether probable that many deficiencies due to lack of experience were overlooked. We have common sense enough to realize that soldiers do not emerge all panopied at the flat of the American Jove and reveal themselves at once as supremely efficient and supremely heroic.

But the eulogies continue to come, not merely from American correspondents, but from London and Paris, after no inconsiderable test on the fighting line. The dithyrambic Rosner, the newspaper minstrel to whom is assigned the business of accompanying the Kaiser, is scarcely more ecstatic in behalf of his imperial master than are the correspondents of staid British newspapers concerning the Americans. Instead of registering a normal reaction against presenting Americans as the whole show, as some of our enthusiastic correspondents have done, the Paris and London newspapers are the precursors of a chorus of our praise. The conclusion seems unescapable that our boys have not only done well, but exceptionally well.

Germany has suddenly ceased to belittle our army. It is conceded that the Americans are formidable in attack, although it is claimed they are blundering in defense—do not know how to fall back properly. Perhaps the criticism is just. Our units have not yet had much experience in retreat. The fault of sticking is one that most generals like to see developed in their commands. Well equipped, young, of high physical powers, the belated German acknowledgment that the Americans do amount to something is calculated to quiet the fears of our citizens who have been under apprehension lest Americans get a reputation for boastfulness. Some of the romantic stories may be overdone, but unless every one is a liar the boys may be said to have done and to be doing exceedingly well.

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The visit of Prince Henry to this country was deliberately planned as a part of the German pre-war propaganda. If any more hereditary advisers come over here to help undermine democracy, we ought to know how to receive them.

It is fifty-eight years ago that the late Samuel Henry Montgomery was shot through the arm at Gettysburg. On July 2, 1863, he could not have imagined that he would be spared so long. It is a lesson in courage and hope for many a boy in France today.

When the Kaiser said England and France were going down because they were ruled by lawyers, he remembered, no doubt, that our Declaration of Independence was signed by twenty-six lawyers. Only five farmers and one planter signed. At turning out one Germanic King, supported by Hessian mercenaries, the lawyers despised by the Kaiser did well enough to earn his contempt.

"A disgraceful breach of international law" is what Count Loxburg called his being searched at Hall. The person of a returning diplomat is sacred under the rules and customs of international etiquette. When the author of "spurious versenekt" is rubbed the wrong way the yellow in his character comes out. The Llandovery Castle was to have been sunk spurious versenekt, and that was proper, but to touch the pockets of Loxburg is a breach of faith. When a diplomat becomes the instigator of murder, why is he allowed to return at all?